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SUBJECT: WHAT'S IN A TRIBAL BATTALION?

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth M. hillas, PRT Leader, Babil PRT, Dept of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) In recent weeks, there have been cross-cutting political pressures in Babil regarding the establishment of an "Iraqi Police (IP) tribal battalion." ISCI Governor Salam Saleh Mahdi Al-Muslimawi has pushed hard to have one established but so far without success. He has been looking to capitalize on the MOI's verbal approval, not yet confirmed officially, for an increase of 2,500 police over the current authorized level of 9,702. However, if approved, there are already 2,165 viable recruits from North Babil in the pipeline (all or most SOIs) competing to fill these new positions.

¶2. (C) The Governor has become very frustrated over his inability to convince the Minister of Interior to specifically authorize a tribal battalion. By his own admission, the Governor has been unable for the last two months to even secure a meeting with the Minister of Interior. He also failed to persuade the National Security Council to make a decision on a tribal battalion a condition for his agreement to moving ahead last week in Babil assuming Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) over security, leading to an outburst by the Governor at an NSC meeting in mid-October.

¶3. (C) IA and IP commanders in Babil do not support the Governor's proposal. The normally compliant Provincial Director of Police, MG Fadhl Raddad, has quietly opposed the Governor on this issue, fearful that a tribal battalion could lead to a politicization of the IP, according to provincial SWAT commander Abbas, who has strongly opposed the Governor's efforts. In Abbas' view, a tribal IP battalion would effectively constitute a Badr Battalion within the police. MG Abdul Ameer, the commander of the Iraqi Army 41st Brigade based in Babil, is also firmly against the tribal battalion initiative.

¶4. (C) Nor has the Babil Dawa party leadership, which has its own agenda in the creation of Tribal Support Councils, supported the Governor on standing up a tribal battalion. According to the Dawa's Deputy Provincial Chair, the Governor would move forcefully to place unqualified Badr personnel into such a tribal battalion, and as a result be able to control its operations. Several leaders of Babil's IFCNR-sponsored Tribal Support Council, an initiative of the PM's office, have an ambivalent view about standing up a tribal battalion. They perceive the patronage power that could come with a tribal battalion, while recognizing that the Governor's interest in packing such a battalion with his Badr supporters would likely predominate.

¶5. (C) Earlier this month, SWAT raided Badr's offices in Hillah and seized RPGs, mortars and silencers. Then this week there was an attempted assassination against an independent candidate for the Provincial Council, in which Badr is suspected of having played a role, although there are still other possible explanations. Against this backdrop, many Babil political and security officials are asking who would be in a Tribal Battalion if the Governor prevails. The answer seems to be: Badr not to

ask.

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